

ICSM Sub-Aqua Merger Appeal

In light of the decision to merge ICSM Sub-Aqua with IC Underwater last year, we (ICSM Sub-Aqua) would like to exercise our right to appeal this decision. This appeal is supported by the executive committee, following a meeting in September 2011. On paper there are a number of reasons given for why the merger of the two clubs would appear to be a sensible option. However, prior to the decision taken to merge the two clubs, we were not given the opportunity to address the reasons which had been stated for the merger. There are points that were not apparent when this decision was made and given their importance we would now like to use this opportunity to have those considered.

Activities

ICSM Sub-Aqua and IC Underwater do share a number of similar activities, however ICSM Sub-Aqua has a history of carrying out medical research projects. Medical research projects within our club give medical students the opportunity to reinforce some of their course material, learn interesting new information about hyperbaric medicine that may be useful to their future profession and give them first-hand experience of research. We also receive training in the medical implications of diving and in first aid from qualified doctors. This goes far beyond the required BSAC training and is very valuable to our medical student members and of great benefit to our other members.

This academic year we have already organised three trips to of training students. Additionally, we are hoping to carry some original medical research into exhaled nitric oxide in divers, as part of a wider asthma project.

Timetabling

ICSM Sub-Aqua work around the medical school timetable, which is vastly different from the standard college dates, ensuring training in the pool and in open water does not clash with the examination periods. We also ensure that our training times allow students to commute into Central London from hospital placements, which can be as far away as Staines, and as well as arranging catch up weekends for those unable to make all training sessions due to hospital placements. We commence courses at select points throughout the year in order to ensure that medical students who have external placements can attend the desired course.

We provide BSAC training for members prior to their electives, which allows them to experience diving wherever in the world they decide to go. As our final year students are split into three groups for electives we often tailor training to their needs so they can be fully qualified before they go. Our ability to tailor practical training and commence courses at select points throughout the year is greatly beneficial to those with undertaking electives (and other members).

Cost

Diving is an expensive sport and with the added debt of the long course for a medical student, ICSM Sub-Aqua seeks to ensure that diving can be carried out for as little as possible so that it is open to every medical student. The following are just some of the ways we are able to achieve this: We have a lower membership price than IC Underwater and do not charge for kit hire, unlike IC Underwater. We provide day trips for those only able to attend for the day (due to cost or other commitments) and provide cheap accommodation alternatives, such as camping, when we go on longer dive trips.

It has been suggested that the use of the IC Underwater air compressor would make it cheaper for members (saving £2-£3 per open water trip per student), however, their charge for kit hire easily amounts to more than this and therefore any initial saving would be offset. Additionally, the majority of air fills would take place on a trip and therefore the use of the compressor would not be available for the majority of air fills needed for a trip. We have also recently received funding from the St Mary's Association which means we will continue to provide free use of kit to our members.

Grant

It may have appeared that ICSM Sub-Aqua had not spent its grant from the Union last year. This is not the case. The majority of our grant from the Union is spent on pool hire and then summer training trips. Due to faults in the update of the online financial system and the decision to merge the two clubs being made before the summer, it appeared that we had not and would not spend our grant. This was proven not to be the case and our grant was spent before the end of the July 2011.

Membership

At the time of the initial meeting where the decision was made to merge the two clubs, we had 19 of the required 20 student members. It is important to note that ICSM Sub-Aqua have a lot of members who join us in the summer and therefore the figure available at the time the decision was made was not an accurate representation of the number of the members of our club. We ended the year with 21 student members.

This year we already have 20 student members, a number of whom were freshers last year and who are now sitting on our committee. In the past it had been more usual to see older students taking up those positions and we consider this to be a good sign of the growth of our club.

Training Clashes

ICSM Sub-Aqua holds training on Monday nights, unlike IC Underwater who train on Wednesdays. As Wednesday is used for BUCS matches, were the merger to go ahead, students who wish to be part of a dive club as well as another club where they may be a team member are forced to choose between being on that team and being a diver with IC Underwater. This forced choice is due to the fact that matches are often away and it would not therefore always be practical to return in time to attend diving at IC Underwater. This may well have a negative future impact on participation and membership numbers and certainly would have an immediate impact on some of our current members.

Further, ICSM Sub-Aqua is also fortunate to have a team of loyal dedicated doctors and alumni who provide training and additional courses to members. The ability of those members to assist our club is likely to diminish were a merger to occur, due to work rotas and other responsibilities which would then clash with the training night

Union Cost

The amount of funding that ICSM Sub-Aqua receives from the Union is easily less than 10% of that which IC Underwater receives. We understand that our club has fewer members than IC Underwater and therefore we will receive less funding. However, next year IC Underwater will be receiving approximately £200 per student member whereas ICSM Sub-Aqua will receive approximately £40 per student member. Were this clubs to merge this would increase the costs to the Union by approximately £3200. Therefore, not merging the two clubs represents the cheaper option for the Union.

Tour Report

We are grateful to the Union for providing additional funds for our tour this year and a tour Report was submitted less than two weeks following the tour taking place. It was suggested, following the reasons for merger, that our tour report was not submitted. This was not the case, nor was it three weeks late as was then suggested once we challenged the initial error.

ICSM Sub-Aqua is grateful to the Trustees for taking the time to consider our appeal.

ICSM Sub-Aqua Club